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Romera-Navarro, Miguel

Report on trip to Spain in
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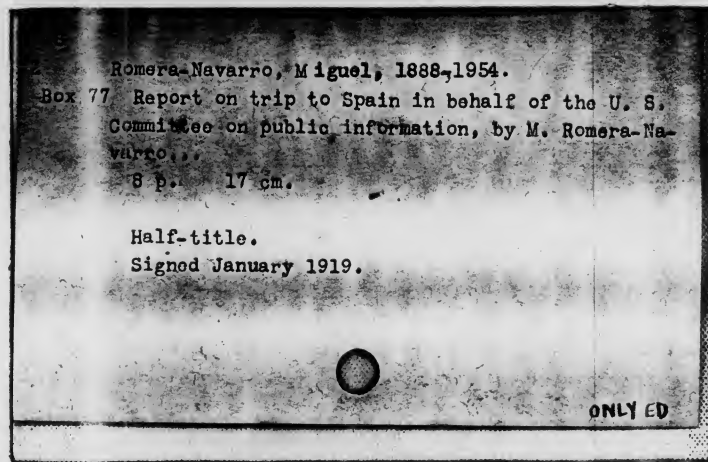
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REPORT ON

TRIP TO SPAIN

IN BEHALF OF THE

U. S. COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

By M. ROMERA-NAVARRO

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

MR. EDGAR G. SISSON,

Chairman, Division of Foreign Service
Committee on Public Information,
Washington, D. C.

SIR:—In June last I was commissioned by Mr. Will Irvin, at that time Director of the Foreign Division of the Committee on Public Information, to go to Spain on a lecture tour during the summer months—to spread there a knowledge of the life, institutions and ideals of the American people, and especially to point out the strong feeling of sympathy which exists in the United States for the Spanish-speaking countries; the important work carried on by American scholars in the field of Spanish letters, and the complete vindication by American historians of the work of colonization done by Spain in the New World.

Before the time for my departure I had various interviews with Hon. Frank J. Marion, Director of the Committee for Spain, who was at that time in New York. He suggested, instead of only the summer months, a term of one year, a change which met with the approval of Mr. Irvin.

With this object in view Mr. Irvin asked for me a leave of absence for one year from my position as Instructor at the University of Pennsylvania, which was granted.

Having arrived in Madrid on July 15th, I reported to the Committee. When prepared to depart on tour through the Northern cities, Miss Irene A. Wright,

who was manager for Mr. Marion at that time, resigned her position, and at Mr. Marion's request I provisionally took her place. Until August 15th I was in the office of the Committee, assisting Mr. Marion in reorganizing the work. After arranging the pro-American press campaign in Madrid and the provinces, and the work of the Committee running smoothly, I proceeded on my lecture tour on August 16th.

After lecturing in the Northern and Northwestern cities, and upon returning to Madrid, I received invitations from various universities and other institutions to deliver lectures at Valencia, Valladolid, Zamora, Salamanca, and eight other cities, but two weeks later the epidemic of gripe spread throughout Spain to such an extent that theatres, clubs, schools, etc., were closed, and public gatherings forbidden.

During the latter part of September and the first half of October, being obliged to remain in Madrid owing to the sanitary conditions in the provinces, I worked in the office of the Committee, arranging with editors of Spanish educational, industrial and technical magazines for the publication of material received from the Committee in the United States. During that period I also translated some important pamphlets, printed later by the Committee, and wrote a series of articles on American subjects for the leading journals of Madrid, namely, *La Lectura*, *La Esfera*, *El Figaro*, *La Correspondencia de España*, *La Epoca*, *Alrededor Del Mundo*, *Heraldo de Madrid*, *American News*, etc.

When sanitary conditions permitted, in the later part of October, I continued lecturing in Central and Southern Spain.

In November, shortly after the armistice was signed, I was ordered by Mr. Marion to return to America and report to the Central Committee.

The places, dates and subjects of lectures are as follows:

August 17th—*Bilbao*. "The American Historians and Spain," in the Institute.

August 20th—*Santander*. "The American Writers and Their Relation to Spanish Literature," in the Ateneo.

August 23d—*Oviedo*. "The Work of American Scholars in the Field of Spanish Letters," in the University.

August 26th—*Gijón*. "American Travellers and Their Views About Spain," in the Ateneo.

August 30th—*León*. "The Friends of Spain in America," in the Ateneo.

September 2nd—*Vigo*. "Spain and America," in the School of Arts.

September 6th—*La Coruña*. "Spain in the New World as Viewed by American Historians," in the Theatre Rosalía de Castro.

October 26th—*Albacete*. "The Influence of Spanish Civilization in the United States," in the Ateneo.

November 2nd—*Madrid*. "The Hispanic Movement in the United States," in the Ateneo.

November 8th—*Zamora*. "Spain and the United States," in the Casino.

November 15th—*Salamanca*. "The Hispanists in the United States," in the University.

November 16th—*Valladolid*. "Spanish Literature in America," in the Ateneo.

November 22nd—*Cádiz*. "Spanish Culture in America," in the Royal Spanish-American Academy.

November 23rd—*Córdoba*. "The Friends of Spain in America," in the Circulo de la Amistad.

November 24th—*Sevilla*. "The Literary Relations Between Spain and the United States," in the Ateneo.

November 27th—*Almería*. "The Influence of Spanish Civilization in the United States," in the Casino.

December 10th—*Ávila*. "A Vindication of the Work of Spain in the New World as Accomplished by American Historians," in the Institute.

December 11th—*Toledo*. "The Hispanic Movement in the United States," in the Artists' Club.

December 12th—*Guadalajara*. "The Work of American Scholars in the Field of Spanish Letters," in the Teachers' College.

I—Most of the lectures, as stated in the above schedule, were delivered at Universities, Academies and other cultural centers.

II—Invitation cards, halls, light and other expenses were paid everywhere by the institutions patronizing the lectures.

III—The attendance at lectures was small in Bilbao and Santander, and very large in all the other cities, varying from three hundred persons in Vigo to over one thousand in La Coruña.

IV—The audiences were composed of all classes, from city officials to workingmen.

V—Knowing that my mission was only to promote the better understanding of American life and ideals and to strengthen the bond of friendship between the two countries, my audiences included a large pro-German element.

VI—Throughout I found the people were greatly interested in obtaining information about the United States, regardless of their political views, and were also ready to have a sympathetic understanding of its ideals. The pro-German elements, feeling the greatest bitterness for England and France, considering them as traditional enemies of Spain, look upon the United States either with indifference, interest or favor: never with hatred or even dislike.

VII—In Vigo, for instance, where the leading people were pro-German my lecture, without their cordial help, would not have been a success, and there, where all the other Allies had failed, we succeeded, due to the fact that the pro-German leaders were not anti-American. They seemed to have the greatest dislike for the other Allies, but at the same time desiring for Spain the good friendship of America, as they consider that the future of Vigo—on account of its geographical position—depends upon close commercial relations between the two countries.

VIII—In most cities I was received and entertained by its representative men. For instance, in La Coruña, by the Mayor, the President of the University Popular, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, the Director of the Institute, the Director of the School of Commerce, and others.

IX—In some cities banquets were given in honor of my mission. In other cities I have been honored by being made a member of cultural institutions, as in Cadiz, by the Royal Spanish-American Academy.

X—The press, in every city visited, announced my lectures repeatedly, and afterward published articles of comment—the pro-German as well as the pro-Ally newspapers.

XI—The same may be said of the Madrid press, which, whether pro-Ally or pro-German, printed telegrams of their correspondents regarding the lectures.

XII—Over two hundred newspapers are known to have written about the first seven lectures; the clippings of which are kept on the Committee's files. The succeeding lectures met with like recognition. Concerning the lecture in Madrid, the following leading newspapers devoted more than half a column, approving the mission: *El Figaro*, *La Tribuna*, *El Sol*, *El Imparcial*, *La Epoca*, *La Acción*, *El País*, *Día y Noche*.

XIII—I have obtained the distinct impression that any kind of work undertaken by the United States to promote the knowledge of its life and ideals will find, in the sections which I have visited, the greatest interest and sympathy. Regarding the period of the war, the work had to be done with all frankness and without favoring the entrance of Spain into the conflict; just to demonstrate to the Spaniards the unselfish purpose of America in the war, her desire that human and national rights and equities be recognized everywhere; the need of giving America moral, not armed, support. Every one that I have met in my tours was a resolute

supporter of Spanish neutrality, and resented any attempt made to draw Spain into the conflict. On that account I have carefully avoided, especially in the titles of lectures, anything that could give them the character of war propaganda.

M. ROMERA-NAVARRO.

January, 1919.

I most respectfully refer to the following gentlemen in support of the statements made in the above report:

Julio de Lazúrtegui, President of the Unión Ibero-Americana, Bilbao; José de Olabe, Secretary of the Ateneo, Santander; Enrique Urios, Dean of the University, Oviedo; Fernando García Vela, Secretary of the Ateneo, Gijón; José María Vicente, Director of the Escuela Normal, León; Manuel Sitjá, President of the Gimnasio, Vigo; Angel del Castillo, President of the University Popular, La Coruña; Manuel Alcázar, President of the Ateneo, Albacete; M. Hazañas y La Rúa, Secretary of the Ateneo, Madrid; Eduardo Gutiérrez, Vice-President of the Circulo, Zamora; Miguel de Unamuno, President of the Ateneo, Salamanca; Ricardo Allué, Vice-President of the Ateneo, Valladolid; Pelayo Quintero, President of the Royal Spanish-American Academy, Cádiz; Enrique Romero de Torres, Director of the Museo Provincial, Córdoba; Francisco Castillo Baquero, President of the Ateneo, Sevilla; Joaquín Navarro Saavedra, President of the Casino, Almería; Guillermo Hernández, Director of the Institute, Avila; Andrés Álvarez, President of the Centro de Artistas e Industriales, Toledo; Felipe Ortega, Director of the Escuela Normal, Guadalajara.

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